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AI & THE
FUTURE OF
ART

VOL. 1 ISSUE 1





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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Esteemed Readers,

Welcome to the first issue of ARO. In this magazine you will find articles on a variety of subjects. You will find contributions from writers that you wholeheartedly agree with, and others that you vehemently disagree with. Some will make you feel the warmth of humanity while others make you question whether we are doomed to annihilate ourselves because of our seemingly schizophrenic existence.

The reason I started working on Project ARO is simple. To help you the reader to see the world and the things in it from a different point of view. I don't want to tell you what to think, but I do want to teach you how to think. By offering different opinions on the same topic from multiple vantage points, we hope to be able to bridge what seems to be a widening rift between people based on race, class, sexual orientation, gender, and innumerable other categories.

Our goal here at ARO is simple. To strive to always be making today better and tomorrow a little bit brighter. We live in a way where we can live up to our ultimate potential and we want to give you the chance to do the same. Steel sharpens steel which requires a little friction. We want to spark collaboration and rivalries. The world is on the verge of significant changes and we want to present those changes here so you can participate in them, improve them, or develop something completely different and superior.

Sound like something you want to be a part of? All you have to do is follow two axioms.

Be Bold. Seek Truth,

Theophanous Rex



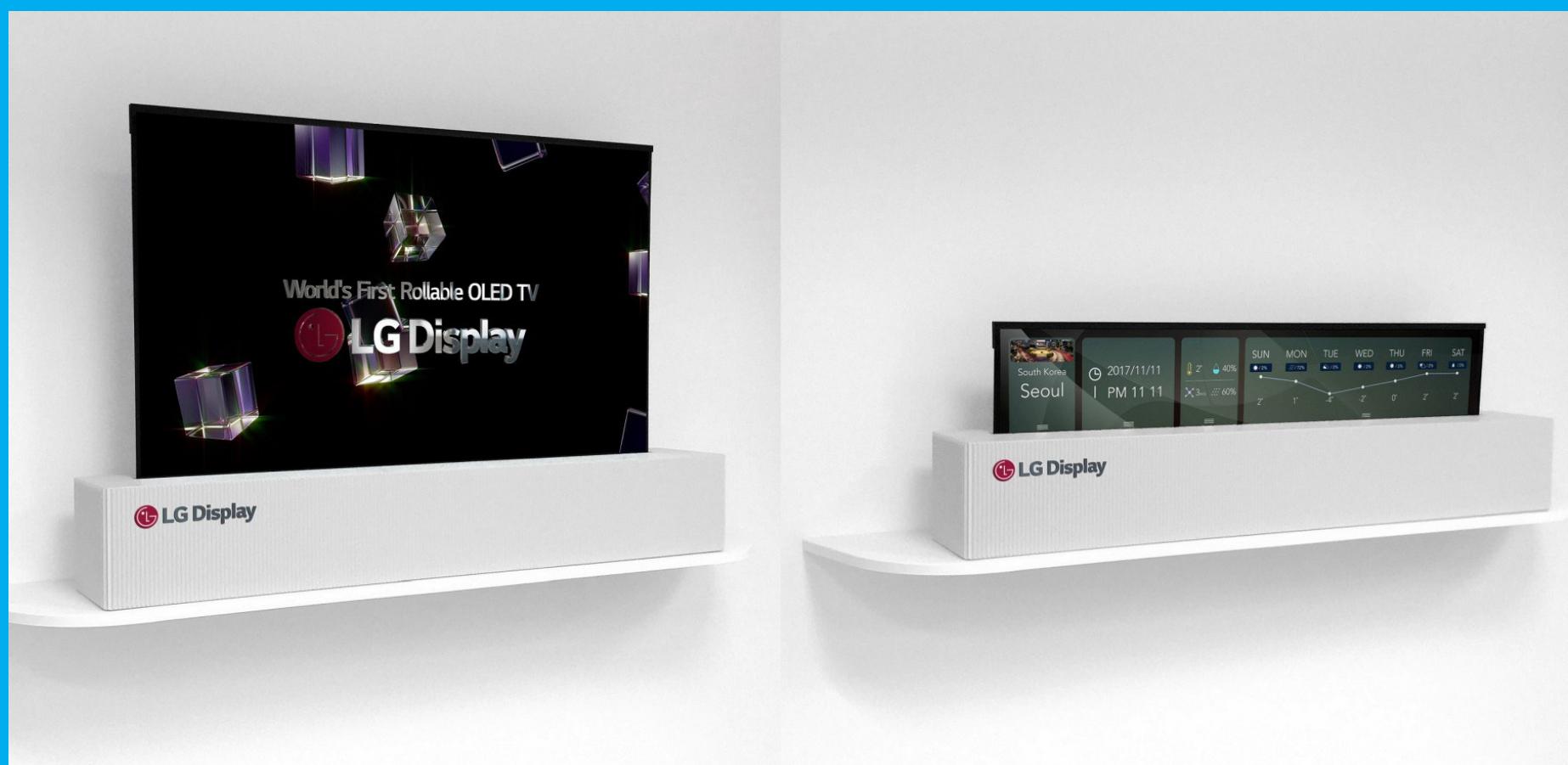
FEATURE FROM THE FUTURE

Anyone else remember the early 2000's when flat screens were becoming all the new rage? They were popping up everywhere and getting bigger with higher resolution all while slimming down in thickness? Screens in your bathroom, the kitchen, and my personal favorite, from watching almost every episode of Pimp My Ride, your car. Screens in the headrest, the steering wheel, the dash, your trunk, the doors. Mad Mike could make a screen fit anywhere. Shout out to mad Mad Mike.

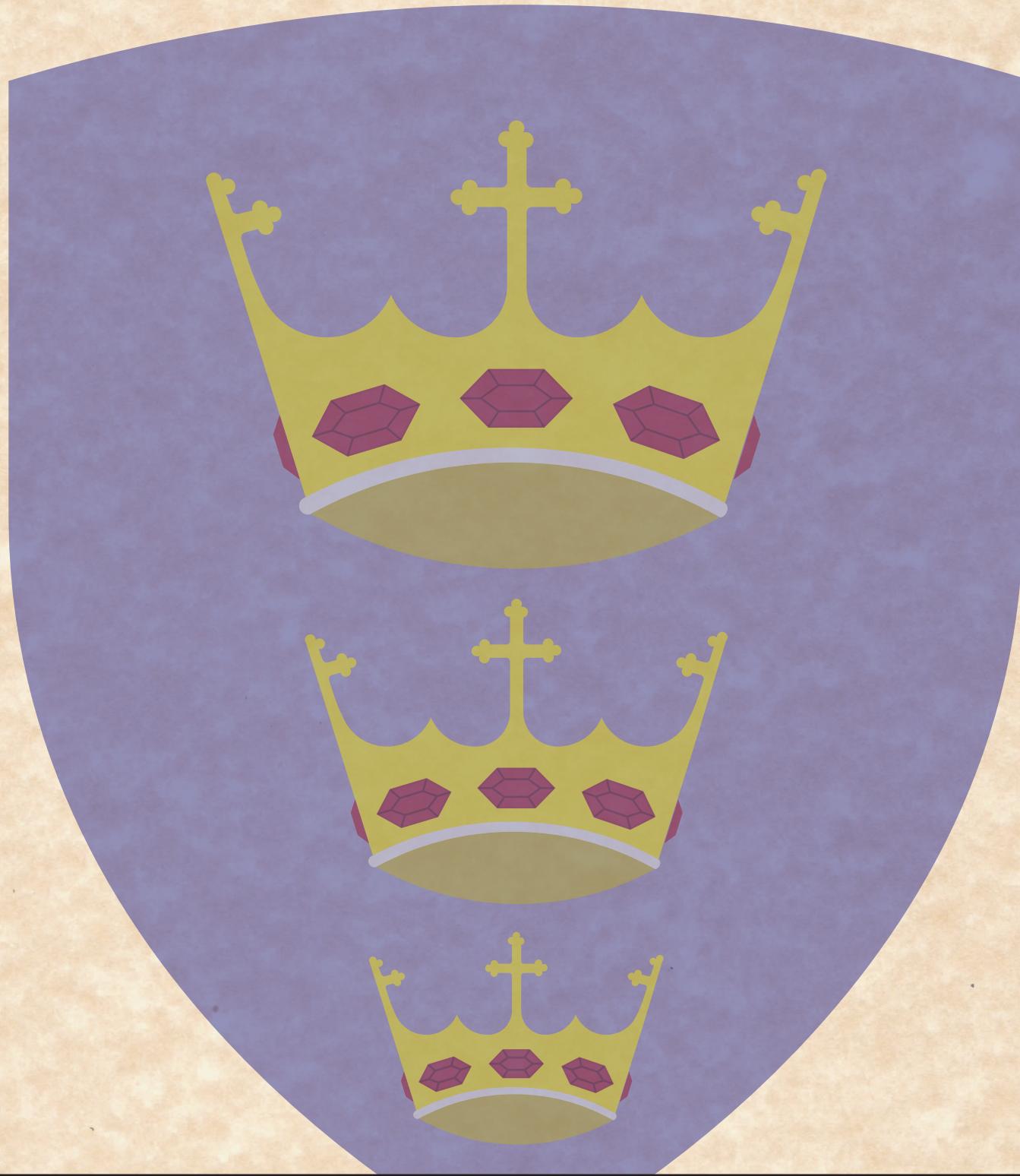
Fast forward to the very near future even the slim ubiquitous screens of today will look bulky compared to those in the pipeline.

LG is known for pushing display technology into new domains every year at CES and this year was no different. LG showed off an impressive 65 inch 4K display that fits in what is basically a poster tube. No details on when it will go on sale or the price but lets just think about the implications of this device for a minute. Instead of reading a newspaper with static images now I have a paper straight out of the realm of Harry Potter. The pictures move and tell the story that I'm reading. How hard would it be to take it a step further, hook the screen up via bluetooth to a little portable cpu and now its not just a screen for the news but it's a tablet or laptop. Its convenience factor makes this technology something that we are sure to see become ubiquitous in our lifetime.

Imagine replacing anything that is made from paper today with a screen. Well not origami paper. I don't think we've come that far yet. But the wallpaper in your house could very well soon be dynamic instead of a static pattern. Maybe someday soon we will be able to replace all our devices with a screen and a backpack with a CPU inside.



The Round Table



Arthur and his knights would meet at the round table to discuss serious matters. Over the centuries the round table has evolved into a place where opinions on controversial topics can be offered without reprisal. We continue in that same vein talking about topics where writer and reader alike have an open forum to offer their opinion free from judgement.

Media of Expression and Their Effects on Perception and Behaviour

By Piers Murphy

The question of how much we really change between generations is a debate that's raged for as long as we've been capable of conscious reproduction. For concepts like "human nature" to hold any water whatsoever, we have to concede that there is some commonality between ourselves and our ancestors. And yet, every generation seems to rail against everything that previous generations used to define themselves. Perhaps then, it's simply a question of the same basic principles through a new lens every time. "Different animal, same beast."

The game of taking a society comprised of individuals and assigning a collective identity to it is always a dangerous one prone to generalisation and prejudice. We do not exist in a vacuum and cannot afford to ignore the cultural forces that push and haunt our every supposedly autonomous decision. So we are forced to ask, "to what extent am I a product of my cultural environment?" The defining characteristic of any cultural ecosystem, the thing that sets it apart from the past, is the role of its various predominant media; their forms, uses and abuses. I'm not talking specifically about Fox News vs CNN, although news does play a part in it. I'm talking in broader terms: print, music, comic books, spoken word, the Internet; the fundamental building blocks that make up the dynamics of our communication, often so ingrained in our cultures that we overlook their very existence. The Internet has certainly received a great deal of attention, potentially due to its unusually immediate ascent to the top of the cultural totem pole. This suspicion at the web's instant proliferation manifests itself in all sorts of bizarre questions: "does the unprecedented efficiency of the Internet inculcate an expectation of instant gratification in the younger generation? Does it shorten attention spans?" In a word, no, it doesn't. Studies have consistently shown a steady increase in acceptance of deferred gratification, a trend barely even influenced by the dawn of the internet. The famous "marshmallow test", conducted over the last 50 years by the University of California, has shown children's capacity for deferred gratification increasing by about one minute per decade since records began. As well as this, the deterioration of the "attention span", a vague, pseudo-scientific term at that, has no significant, reliable basis. TIME, USA Today, The New York Times, the British Times, and The Guardian all based well-known doomsday prophecies on a report by the Consumer Insights team of Microsoft Canada from 2015. Microsoft's findings on attention span, however, were

taken from an organisation called Statistic Brain. Statistic Brain, meanwhile, claim to take their findings from the National Center for Biotechnology Information at the US National Library of Medicine, which has no record of any research that would support such statistics.

So yeah, despair away, but check the stats first.

But it would be short-sighted to argue that the internet's fundamental influence on day-to-day life has no impact on human psychology and, by extension, human behaviour. For the sake of clarification, it's important to actually define "medium". For the purposes of this piece, a medium will be any means of communication of information, actualisation of concept or expression of self. In other words, if you have an idea, a medium is the way you choose to share that idea with someone else. Each medium has its own unique features which lend themselves to particular types of ideas. As such, "media" is a very broad term, used to describe a huge variety of concepts, some of which have nothing in common at all. For example, written language is a medium. So is spoken language. So is, in a sense, a given dialect in both forms. English is a medium, complete with its own quirks and nuances. English is "better" for describing most of the ideas that are embedded in the western psyche than say, Japanese, because we have developed specific vocabulary for the expression of these ideas. That's not to say that you can't express the same ideas in another language, but certain concepts would require a rather liberal translation in order to fit into the linguistic and cultural patterns. In the same way, if a writer had an idea for a book, in most cases, they probably COULD turn that idea into a screenplay, although the different properties of the media would mean that some elements would be lost or added in translation. Inner monologue would have to be verbalised in voiceover, flowery descriptive passages would be replaced with the objective eye of a camera just looking at something.

It has long been suggested that watching films instead of reading books has a demonstrable effect on intelligence and behaviour. Perhaps because it generally takes less time and concerted effort to watch a film- one sits still and, even if your concentration wanders, the film still finishes on schedule. A book requires constant focus- the pages will not turn themselves. This is not a suggestion that films are "dumber" than books- that would be ridiculous. It's just an acknowledgment that someone who is not interested in active consumption of media will find it easier to at least watch a film, if not to understand it. Whichever way the causal link between stupidity and watching films flows, the idea that "just watch the movie" is a marker of ignorance and laziness is pretty widely held. Why then, is the same not true of the media of languages? We, as a culture, are quick to suggest that people who enjoy opera are somehow fundamentally different to people who prefer to watch TV, but the Sapir-Whorf theory, that the properties of the language we speak alters our perception of the world around us, has been largely discredited in the linguistic field.

Outside of academia, the idea still holds some sway with the public; someone who knows Latin will often be regarded as smarter than someone who speaks Spanish, even if they are roughly equivalent in difficulty. But this is more for cultural reasons than concrete scientific ones- the type of institution that bothers to teach Latin is often regarded as more selective and elitist. So where are the people arguing that the obscenely long words in their native language give Welsh children greater attention spans and patience than their English peers? Well, they're busy arguing that "hip-hop has done more damage to young African Americans than racism in recent years", or that the instant gratification infinite dopamine loops of Facebook are corrupting the youth's capacity for critical thought.

I'm not arguing that people are wrong to be concerned about the dangers of such a powerful paradigm shift as the dawn of the internet. Instead, I'm suggesting that if we put our hang-ups to one side and apply the same sense of critical, academic analysis to modern media, we may find some very interesting, unexpected results.

A remarkable feature of the internet is its capacity to exist at once as a medium and an aggregator of other media. Film, text, audio, visual art, language- they all make up the body of the internet's broader meta-medium, to say nothing of all the new sub-media made possible by the existence of the internet. Twitter, meme templates, YouTube video essays and for a time, Vines, are all products of the broader medium in which they exist. Complete with their own features that mark them out as distinct media capable of expressing particular ideas in unique ways, these new media are redesigning the cultural landscape in which they exist.

They are however, in a constant state of flux, and perhaps this explains why mainstream artists have been slow to accept these newer digital media into the canon of "serious" avenues of artistic expression. What kind of an oeuvre can an artist carve out, when the very medium they choose to work in will be obsolete in two years?

The problem with this line of thinking is that it operates on a set of artistic principles established in the past. Whereas previously, different media had to be consumed independently, often by different audiences - the kind who could afford to go out to the opera were separated by wealth and, by extension, perceived cultural standing, from those who would attend a pantomime - now, thanks to the media aggregator of the internet, a certain degree of equality has been attained. For example, the barrier between cinema and television is being eroded every day, as franchise instalments become more episodic, TVs shows get bigger budgets and more contained stories, and everybody consumes the two in the same way; through their computers.

The extent to which the death of net neutrality will reverse this effect, enforcing a new media-based affluence class system, is unclear, as is its potential impact on the black community, so often blindly marked by the powers that be as a "bad investment", but as it stands, the clearly defined boundaries between the independent media of yesteryear are being stripped away. And as a new generation of consumers inherits the world, with none of their predecessors' hang ups about mixing form, a new generation of artists are paving the way.

The marriage of media previously considered to be distinct is nothing new; from the integration of complex sculpture and friezes into architecture to the union of sound and moving image in the first talkies, we have always sought to purely express the multisensory array of everyday perception. However, there is only so much that the brain can compute at once, so the go-to media in this new age of opportunity are primarily temporally independent, capable of running on their own without constant, undivided attention. As I pointed out earlier, a film occupies your eyes just as much as a book does, but if your attention wanders, the film, unlike the book, does not stop. It is therefore easier to marry film than text to music, a medium that has to run on its own time. Music is a hugely adaptable medium, almost entirely unburdened by function, especially since the dawn of electronic manipulation. As such, a remarkable variety of styles, genres and artistic movements have flourished under its broad umbrella. This is not to mention dance, opera, music videos and all the other visually dependent media that simply would not exist without music's remarkable capacity for integration. It should come as no surprise then, that musical artists are some of the most eager to explore the new grounds that the easy access of transmedia online consumption presents.

Donald Glover, Tyler the Creator and Kanye West have followed similar paths; upon entering their field with entirely original sounds, they have each grown increasingly frustrated with the limitations imposed on them first by their genre, and subsequently by their very medium. The boldly new styles of their respective debuts gradually gave rise to new cultural forces. For Glover, the multiplatform Pharos event and a concurrent film and television career. For Tyler, the Golf lines and his collaboration with Adult Swim. For West, the Yeezy seasons, Donda initiatives and huge multisensory projects that blend concert music with performance art and installation. The much maligned “cult of celebrity” is the glue that binds these seemingly disparate artistic concepts together into singular oeuvres, an identity to which ideas can be pinned, allowing for a resurgence in the image of the “Renaissance man”. But the role of the internet here cannot be overstated; while Leonardo Da Vinci could change disciplines like changing clothes and Yoko Ono could do... whatever you call what she does, the distribution of all these tangents to the mainstream on an equal footing was simply impossible before now. Innovation has always been the game of the marginalised, so it should come as no surprise that rap, with all its anti-establishment arrogance and formalistic flexibility, should be a breeding ground for the resurgence of such bold vision, unburdened as it is by the snotty and stagnant expectations of mainstream artistic criticism.

Black culture in general has a history of such revolutionary creation; a movement is born, and the black community must urgently wring as much beauty out of it as possible before it is appropriated, neutered and sold back by the white mainstream.

But before Justin Timberlake releases his extrasensory transmedia “experience”, there is much to be observed in the fundamental physical properties of these new, ultra modern explorations of media.

The first thing to observe is how the practically overnight supplanting of radio play by online streaming has changed the nature of the album. The long form LP obviously provides a greater opportunity to explore themes than a single 3 minute song does, allowing for a more immersive, comprehensive transmedia experience. Singles are still popular, but pressure on even the most mainstream of artists to create cohesive, structured albums is only increasing. It is also no secret that streaming places the audio experience of listening only a few clicks away from the entire backstory and related companion pieces of the album. Mainstream radio play has always been dominated and dictated by - you guessed it - wealthy white men, so it should be no surprise that a degree of democratisation in the listening process gave a greater voice to black and other minority communities; for the first time in a long time, their tastes were reflected in the charts. But the fact of the landscape's shifting is well-documented. What's more interesting is the effect, if any, this change in the nature of media consumption has on the consumer base itself.

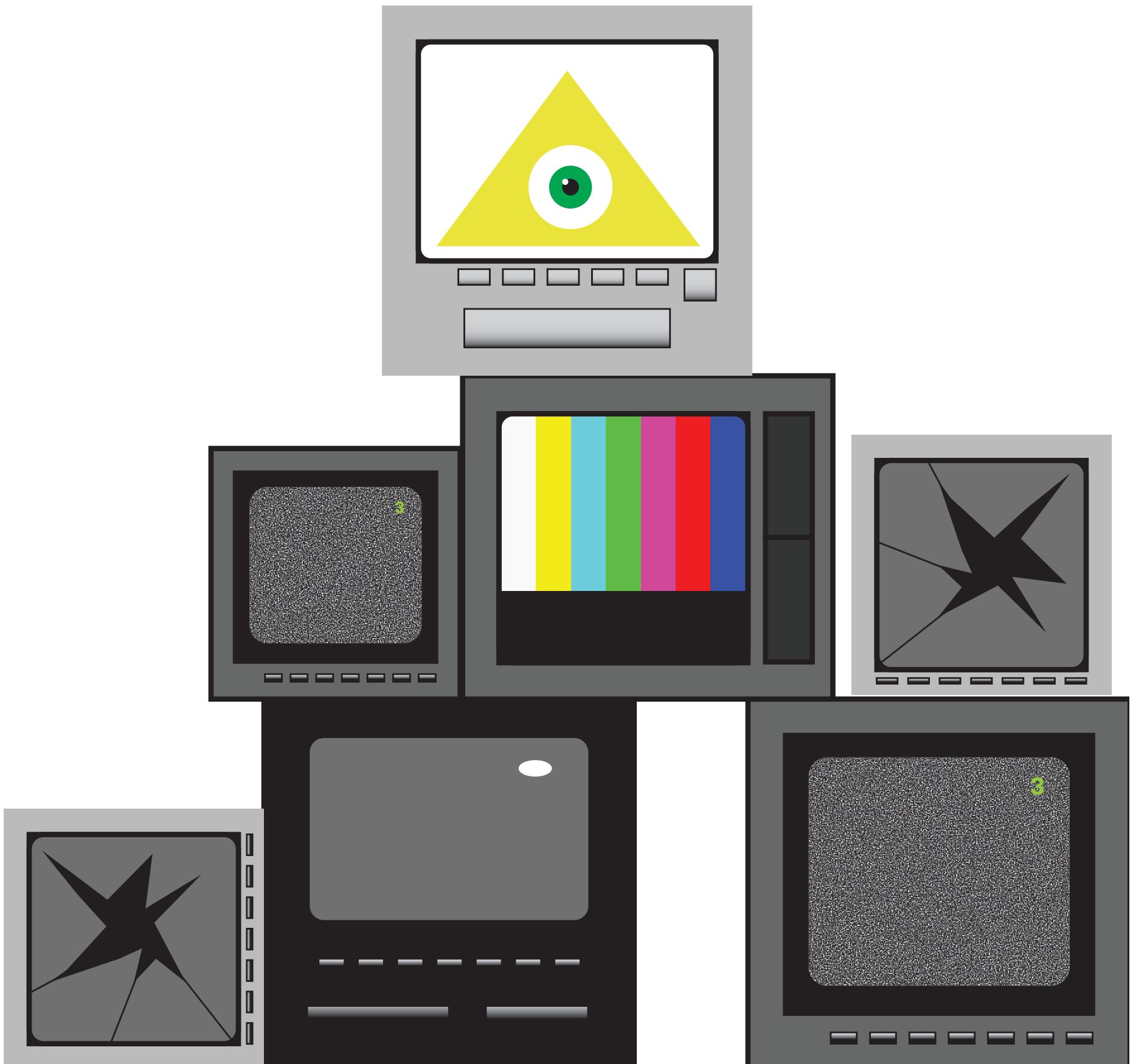
The idea for this piece came from a faintly ridiculous hypothetical; as an avid comics reader, I have noticed that comics fans often have a tendency to speak very quickly, sometimes to the point of unintelligibility. Putting aside the simple fact that ANY passionate fan of anything will often talk about their “thing” in an animated, hyper-verbal fashion, I wondered, painfully self-aware, whether the physical nature of comics might have some impact on the speech patterns of their readers. It is well-documented that children who read comic books often develop communication skills and intelligence at a more advanced rate than their peers. But I wondered if it might be possible for media consumption to impact the way we see the world in adult life; the Sapir-Whorf theory's cousin. Comics are not sequential in the same way as films. Pages are presented as a

whole, and our eyes and brains must create their own sequence for the images. It's often not as simple as the rigid left-right, then up-down model that we borrow from textual literature. So what if, I thought, that perception that allows us to internally sequence simultaneity, bled through into the medium of speech? How would it sound? It would sound like someone trying to say every word in a sentence at the same time. It's a far-fetched notion, but it got me thinking about the way we see the world.

We so often take the information that we consume for granted, without consideration of where it comes from and how it is presented. It's certainly true that the landscape of the internet lends itself to a certain model; in a field where all that information is so readily, simultaneously available, competition for time and attention has become fierce, hence click bait, breathless summaries and intrusive pop ups. This in turn has led to the aforementioned accusations of short attention spans and shallowness attributed to the generation native to the digital world. So why then, is the single, in all its immediate, self contained electric urgency, slowly taking a backseat to the more thoughtful, methodical album, coupled with entire transmedia experiences?

The answer is, of course, that the media we consume, while powerful forces, are simply not capable of overriding the fundamental core of "human nature" - it would take more than the Internet to give an entire generation ADD. Because media are avenues of expression of concept, not concept in themselves; the base ideas that we have sought to express since the beginning of time remain, and still require consideration and patience.

But it is only through recognising the internet as a wholly unbiased, reflective medium - and not a message, the corruptive capabilities of which are to be feared - that we can truly tap into its full capacity for intelligent, detailed, transmedia expression, and share the voices that need to be heard, free from the oversight of those who would seek to silence us.



It surrounds us everyday. Those that create it march to the beat of their own drum. Art. Art has been an intrinsic part of the human experience since we roamed the savannahs of Africa. What does it mean to be an artist and what is the future of art? What drives creation? How do artist view the world around them and their place in it?

Artist often only achieve true fame after their death. Van Gogh, Basquiat, and Monet quickly come to mind as artist who birthed styles that were only received well after they died. The arts are just as important in sharpening the mind as the more logic based disciplines. It enhances our ability to creatively use our logical faculties to solve the problems of our lives and those around us. It's also something that can evoke emotions in us and convey difficult subjects in an easy to comprehend manner.

Here we will present three different artist each working in a distinct format. The traditional artist, the digital artist, and an artist that uses artificial intelligence to create art. Lines continue to blur as to what art is and who is an artist. The tortured artist that labors in obscurity has become an antiquated trope. Maybe in the near future robots will paint and design our murals that blanket cityscapes instead of humans. Only time will tell.





EYE OF THE STORM

An Interview with Lauren Manninen

Amid the caucophony of artist that are out there it is refreshing to come across an artist that makes you stop and ponder their art and the story behind it. The art world is a kaleidoscope of colors, styles, mediums, and stories all vying for attention but all of that falls away when you gaze at Laurens works. They stand alone, not begging for you to compare them to other art by other artist, but to simply have a conversation with the piece one on one. The noise of the outside world falls away and you find yourself at the center of a storm of colors and textures that at first glance seem chaotic, but upon closer inspection flow across the canvas in a fluid and natural manner.

Straddling the banks of the Cedar River 20 miles north of Iowa City rest Cedar Rapids, the home of Lauren Manninen. She received her degree in Fine Arts from the Minneapolis College of Art in Design in 2014.

Lauren is enamored by the meditative act of making, and being completely in the moment of creation. She is comfortable working in a variety of including woodworking, fiber art, and bookbinding, but, it is the conversation she has with the canvas that leaves her feeling invigorated and endlessly curious about where the brush will lead her next.

Her work is informed by abstract expressionism, Zen Buddhist practice, and time spent studying art in Japan. Lauren was kind enough to take sometime away from the studio and answer a few of our questions about her art, and her approach to making art. Oh, and her dope ass studio cats. Cause you know... kyatz.

ARO (A): Thanks for doing this interview with us. I remember when I first saw your work I just had to find out more about it and about you. Especially your centering series. I can stare at those works for hours.

Lauren Manninen (LM): I just put a few more up on my website in the centering series. They really feel like my freshest and feel like the work I'm engaging with the most. I appreciate the chance to talk with you about my work. I think it is important for artists to regularly talk about their work to help them articulate the ideas they are engaging [with].

A: So tell us a little bit about yourself. What was life like for a young Lauren growing up?

LM: I grew up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa which is a decent sized city. My mother is a figure skating coach, and my father an engineer; I like to think I got a bit of their creativity and analytical traits. I've been making art ever since I can remember. I had a drawing room setup in my parent's attic that I would go work in, even in the sweltering summers. During high school I was always working on a new project with some friends, whether that be learning how to turn a wood lathe or planning "sewing party all-nighters". Once we even made a quilt to cover a whole truck for a parade float.

A: Painting in the heat couldn't have been fun. Hopefully your studio situation has improved a bit.

LM: My studio is actually fairly modest, I work out of the sunroom in my house, but it provides really nice painting light.



LM: I actually spent a lot of time in my early years doing digital art. I don't doubt that it is real art, and you can do some really amazing things with it. I spent my early career working in graphic design. I think the ease of manipulating shapes and images in digital art allows for young artists to learn about color and composition in a quicker way. I'm always excited to see what comes out of the digital art field.

But for me, I like the object-ness of traditional painting. You develop a relationship with the canvas as you build layer upon layer. You can add bold texture, and have gravity do some work for you as the paint drips down the surface. You also develop a relationship with your tools, I have favorite brushes, I know which paints have a different personality. I know it all sounds a bit romantic, but the tactile-ness of working with these materials right then and there, and working with them to create something that moves with you is comforting.

A: So fast forward to now. How do you survive and thrive as an artist?

LM: I'm 25 now, and starting doing art full-time this past spring. I'm really fortunate I'm able to. I sell some work at fairs, and teach a few art classes a week to support myself.

A: When did you discover your passion for art?

LM: I think it was always there. But I was a very nervous child, and art allowed me to feel confident in myself. I was always teaching other kids how to draw dragons or something like that.

A: As an artist that works in traditional media how do you feel about digital art? Do you think it's real art?

**“I was a very nervous child...
art allowed me to feel confident in myself.”**

A: What allure does abstract expressionism hold for you?

LM: I like how many abstract expression paintings are like a map, they contain history that tells you how it was made. You can imagine the artist working the paint. I also find them challenging to execute, to get them centered and balanced. I actually find traditional portraiture to be much more forgiving, and I do some of those from time to time.

A: When most people think of meditation they think of someone sitting lotus position, palms up. Can you explain how creating art is similar to this for you?

LM: My meditation practice comes from the Soto Zen school. Which is all about being here and now, and paying complete attention to whatever you are doing. I practice traditional meditation. But it also links into mindfulness and treating the environment (or my paintings) with respect and attention. You get into a state of flow sometimes, and that's a great feeling.

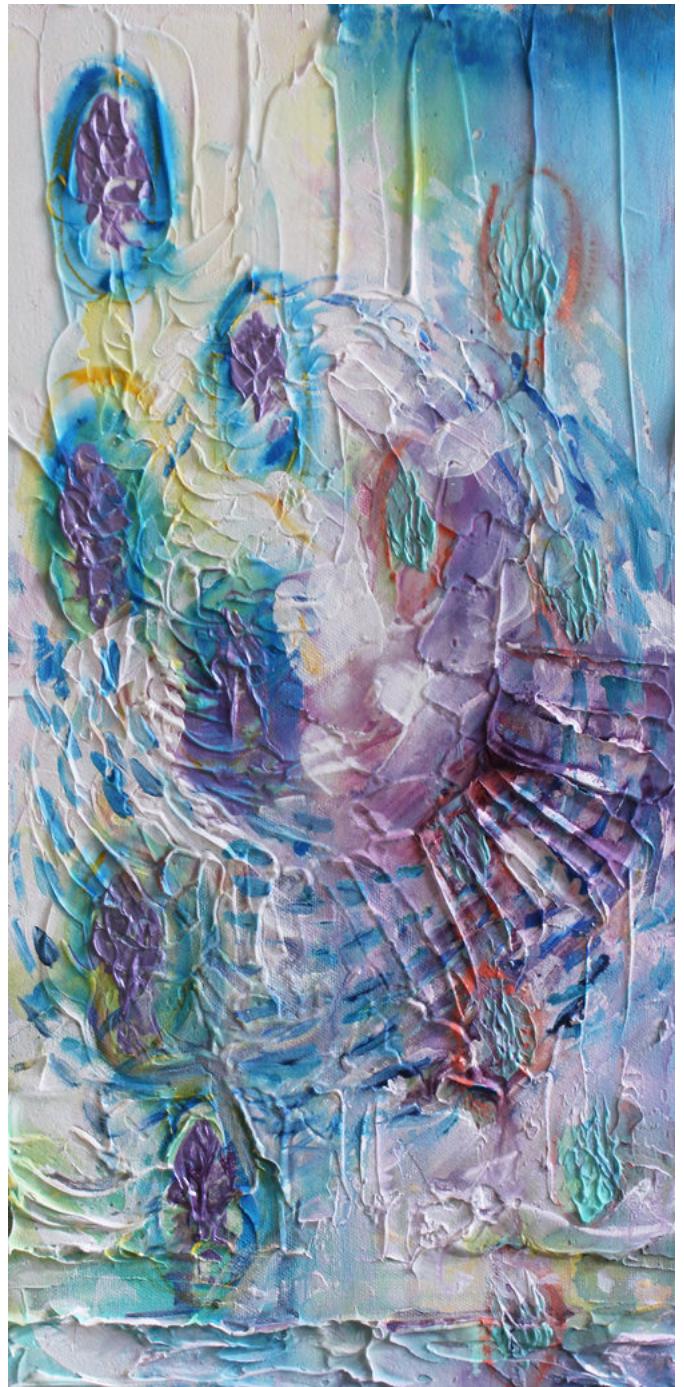
A: Some people might not consider abstract expressionism art or feel that it is just 'splashes and squiggles'. How should viewers approach your art? What can help them understand it?

LM: I think for some people, art needs to be done with "skill and good technique". It just seems like a lack of understanding into the artistic process. I think if they saw the time it takes to make a piece they would appreciate it more. I love watching other abex artists paint on youtube, its almost like a dance.

But my view has always been that anything can be art so long as someone says it is. That does not mean it is good art. And just because its not good art, it doesn't mean it shouldn't have been made. Making art is very therapeutic for some people with little experience and it is important for them to make it too. It's about the process of making art.

A: Is there an overarching theme or message that you want to convey through your art?

LM: I think the message tends to change based on the series, but overall my paintings are a celebration of color, mark-making, and the push and the pull between the painter and the canvas.



**“It’s about the
process of
making art.”**



I try to create art that is accessible by my audience. Because of this I think it is important not to take myself too seriously, it alienates people I think when they are intimidated by art because they don't understand it.

So maybe my message is "It is important to greet a painting as a potential friend."

A: You've had the opportunity to study abroad. How long did you spend in Japan?

LM: I spent 6 months studying at the Osaka University of Arts, and was fortunate enough that I had been studying Japanese since High School. It was a great experience and I would love to go back for a visit soon. The arts culture is amazing in Japan, and everyone I met was working so hard and creating some really amazing stuff.

A: Would you consider your self an Otaku girl?(a big anime fan)

LM: Haha! I wouldn't say an Otaku girl, but I would say I'm a pretty big nerd. People seem surprised when they find out I play DnD, watch anime, and play a lot of video games.

A: What's your favorite anime?

LM: I'd have to say Cowboy Bebop. My friend actually names his corgi Ein.

A: How does your art pre studying abroad in japan differ from the art you create now?

LM: I was doing a lot of experimental digital work before I went to Japan. Like making virtual environments using game design programs. I got back in touch with traditional media after doing a few paintings there for an illustration class.

A: Do you spend time meditating outside of creating art?

LM: I do, I'm also lucky to have a zen community in Cedar Rapids that I am a part of.

A: Walk me through what goes through your mind when you sit in front of a blank canvas. Do you approach it with a particular goal in mind or is your approach more free flowing?

LM: I try not to set a goal, I mostly just see where the paint leads me. So the first thing I do is get some texture on the canvas. I use a lot of modeling paste, which is white. So I put that on and leave it until the next day. Then I paint it over with some colors that call to me. It's a back and forth, I just do what seems like the next best thing. I do a lot of flipping of my canvases as well.

A: Most artist have an art ritual the do before they start creating. They may have to drink from a favorite mug while working or listen to a specific playlist. What's your art ritual?

LM: I listen to a lot of podcasts and music while I paint. But other than that my only other quirk I have is I like to paint sitting on the ground. My two studio assistants like to chill next to me when I do.

A: Tell us about your studio assistants? How helpful are they?

LM: Haha, I have two black cats, Lumin and Luna. They are sometimes helpful, sometimes not. They are no longer allowed to help change my paint water.



A: How can we expect your work to evolve moving forward?

LM: I'd like to continue to build my Centering / Storm Systems series. I feel there is a lot of ground to investigate there. I was also thinking I may revisit some portraiture here in the future. I try not to plan too much, since I often get ahead of myself, and the ideas will not come naturally.

A: What advice would you give aspiring artist?

LM: Keep doing work consistently, and put it out there! No one will see it if you don't do a bit of self promotion.

Also reach out to arts organizations in your area, having a community around you that is enthusiastic and supportive of the arts is hugely important. Even if you just attend or teach a few classes.

A: Do you think formal art training is important?

LM: For me it was fantastic, though I don't think it is necessary for everyone. I had so many interests when I started, that having 4 years exploring what I wanted to do was invaluable. If you work hard, network, and put your work out there things start to come together. People follow and support artists that resonate with them, it's just a matter of finding them!

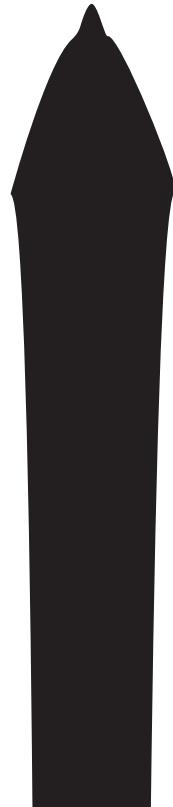
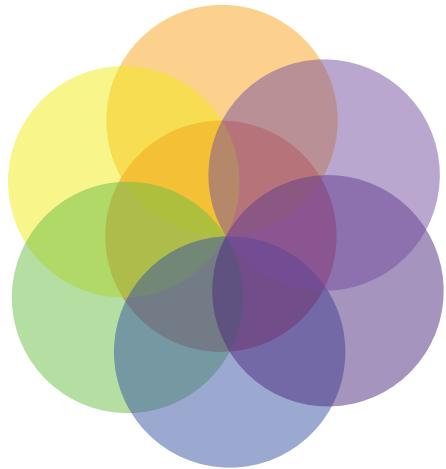
A: Where can our readers go to see more of your work and interact with you?

LM: I have a website at LManninen.com and I'm on instagram at LManninenStudio. There's some pictures of my studio assistants on my instagram as well :)



Digital

Mastery



Speaking with Keila Kirkwood

Art is found everywhere and has proliferated in the digital format throughout the world. The march of progress is inevitable and has changed the way we view what is art. While digital art has not, and my never, reached the same storied heights as traditional art it has allowed for design to become a major industry in its own right. From graphic design to story boarding and animating a lot of things that were once done with more traditional means have migrated to the digital realm. We had a chance to sit down with Keila Kirkwood and talk about this robust industry and her views on art.

Keila's professional endeavors began with a major in Studio Art with a concentration in Design and Photography at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. After interning for a local video game company, she landed a position at a local advertising agency where she set about creating, from scratch, social posts as well as email and other various layouts for Hibbett Sports where she still works.



ARO(A): So tell us a little bit about yourself. What kind of things are you into outside of work?

Keila Kirkwood(KK): I am 28 and grew up in Birmingham, AL [Alabama, USA]. Aside from my day job, I find great interest in the world of comics and graphic novels. I am intrigued by how creation goes from screen to paper and hope to one day engage in that myself. I am also a stop motion fan, chill step lover and a bibliophile.

Overall, I am a creator. It's what I think, dream and long for. I am currently still in the process of studying Photoshop, specifically photo compositing and photo manipulation. I aim to finish my studio, drink lots of green tea and start creating my brand.

A: Do you have a favorite comic or graphic novel?

KK: I'm really into Skin and Earth by Lights right now.

A: What kind of graphic novel can we expect from you when you start your own?

KK: I'm not an Illustrator so it would either be photo-based or something very minimalistic.

“...I am a creator. It's what I think, dream and long for.”



A: What about stop motion draws you to it?

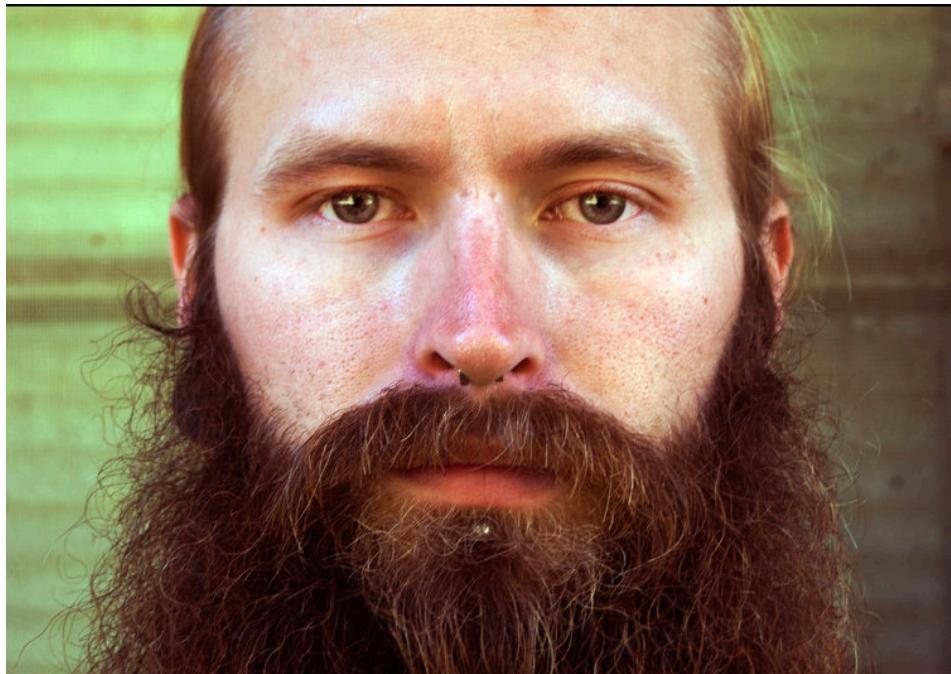
KK: I guess all of the work that goes into creating it. The fact that it is entirely photographed is awesome.

A: Who's your favorite chillstep artist?

KK: I really like Ryan Farish, Divinity, Nanobii, etc.

A: What good books are you reading right now?

KK: I've been into manga lately so currently I am reading Your Lie In April.



A: Your work is amazing. Where do you find your inspiration?

KK: My inspiration tends to come from the fantastical. I adore anything with light and make believe. A lot of my work is photo based as I have been intensely studying Photoshop for a while now, trying to learn all of the ins and outs. When it comes to a camera, I often find myself engaging in portrait sessions with an overarching theme of mind and body dramatics. Aside from photography, I lean more towards minimalism when it comes to vectors and layout design. The cleaner the better.



A: Did you grow up drawing or discover your passion for art later in life?

KK: I'm not an illustrator. My mom is a photographer and has dabbled in Photoshop her entire life. I've always been curious about it. I feel like I've always been creative, I just never knew my "aesthetic" until recently.

A: Do you think it's important for an artist to receive formal training?

KK: I think it's important to be trained but that doesn't have to come from a university. I think you can definitely teach yourself techniques in a shorter amount of time than a school could.



A: As an artist that works primarily in digital media, do you think it's important to work in more traditional mediums?

KK: I don't think so. You can create whatever you like. I like to use Photoshop so I do and that's ok.

A: How competitive a place is the art industry?

KK: I don't think it's as competitive as people assume. The demand for graphic art is high. I feel like success in traditional art is a lot about luck and who you know.

A: What advice would you give someone that wants to work as a professional artist?

I would say to make sure you still create for yourself. If I only created for other people, I would find myself hating art over time.

A: When looking at your website, your piece entitled 'Burn Me Up' really caught my eye. What was the inspiration for that piece?

KK: I read a quote. "It was the prettiest hell I had ever been in; I didn't mind burning at all" I immediately saw a rose on fire.

A: A lot of your photo manipulations are surreal. Am I safe in assuming surrealism is your favorite style? What draws you to surrealism?

KK: Definitely. I love fantasy. I feel like I'm constantly looking at the world as if magic exists. I don't have to wonder what it would look like if fish swam in the sky or if waterfalls could fill a cup. I create what I want to see.

A: Who are some artist that inspire you?

KK: Erik Alms and Cristophe Gilbert for manipulation. I also enjoy pop art such as work by Lights and Roy Lichtenstein.

A: Do you think digital art will eventually replace traditional art?

KK: Unfortunately, I think it's heading that way. There's just a higher demand for digital art. Everyone needs a logo.

A: What do you say to people that don't consider digital art "real art"?

KK: That's just absurd. Anything created is art. There's no difference in a tangible paintbrush and a virtual one.

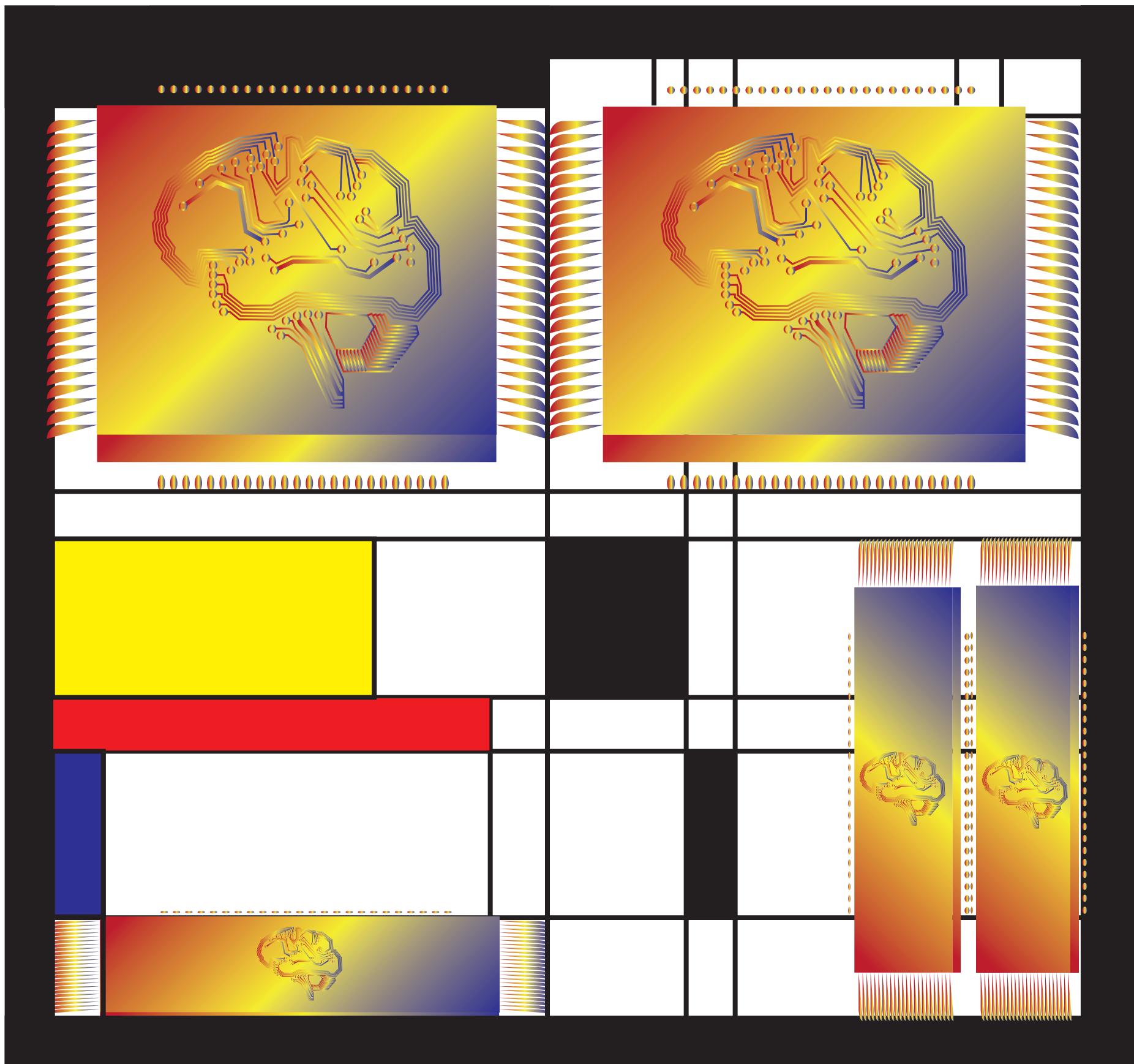
A: Do you have any personal projects in the pipeline that we can look forward to?

KK: I am in the process of creating an inventory in order to showcase my work at conventions. If you happen to see any cool photo-inspired art at a con it might be me haha.

A: How can our readers view more of your work?

KK: Right now, my work is primarily displayed on my website at whatkeilamakes.com.





The Art of Intelligence

An interview with Victor Espinoza

Everyday I am reminded by just how far in the future we are living. And while most people choose to focus on the negative consequences that all these advances create, we should also take a step back and look at the benefits of them. No one can argue that being able to travel distances that took days and months in a matter of hours is a bad thing. Or that while nuclear energy can be used to inflict devastating damage as a weapon the same energy when properly controlled can be used to power cities in a way cleaner than more traditional sources.

The biggest new trends are occurring in robotics. We have all seen the videos from Boston Dynamics showcasing their cadre of biomimetic robots. Robots are running, jumping, even opening doors. And now with the assistance of people, robots and artificially intelligent programs are beginning to create art. We sit down Victor Espinoza to talk about how artificial intelligence and robots will affect an industry that most people often thought would never have to worry about automation.



Name: Victor Espinoza

Age: 30

Birthplace: Tijuana Mexico

ARO (A): Were you into art as a kid or were you more into computers?

VICTOR ESPINOZA (VE): I was more into computers. Art was a very difficult due to the sheer amount of effort required, and after a few attempts my hands would become uncomfortable.

A: What did you study at college?

VE: Nothing really. After turning 18, I dropped out of high school and decided to work a part-time job. Three years later, I [went] to the Porterville Adult School, [skipped] the G.E.D classes and took the G.E.D [test]. Surprisingly I passed immediately then, walked into a local Porterville College only to find out that it didn't offer what I wanted. The internet then became my continuous college-university learning environment.

A: Autodidacticism is the next big thing in education and your proof of that. What is a neural network?

VE: It's a group of nodes connected that have an input layer, [a] center part called the hidden layer, and an output layer, The complexity of neural [networking] is ongoing and comprehensive.



A: Do you consider the finished product your art made by you, the computers art made by it, or is it a collaboration?

VE: It's a collaboration at the moment. It requires human aid for art to be visually pleasing, but in a decade or so, it will become autonomous and robotic.

A: Do you create art in more traditional media?

VE: No. The closest I would come to traditional media would be print's, but I would run out of ink quickly, because I tend to do 5-20 artworks per day.

A: What gave you the idea to use AI to create art?

VE: Deepdreams on Google's supercomputer when it was first showcased on Reddit. Later I found out that an opensource Github program came out called **Neural-Style** created by Justin Johnson aka jcjohnson. It gave me an insatiable desire to push the A.I program to the limits. To this date, we haven't really broke the 24GB Video memory barrier.

A: Can you elaborate on this for us? What is the 24GB Video memory barrier and why is it important to break this barrier?

VE: The 24GB video memory barrier is a personal one, I have achieved 4K artwork quality with only 9GB of combined GPU memory, so with Two Titan V's at 12GB each, I can reach 10,500px on my artwork, its similar to jumping from 4K to 10K display overnight. The only drawback is cost, which would be about \$6,000.





A: Do you think AI will replace human artists in the future?

VE: In a decade or two it will because there is no limit on what A.I robots with a brush can do. It will never sleep or will ever run out of creative flow. Multiple Robots can collaborate information in a swarm, painting a new grand masterpiece of Leonardo Da Vinci inspired styles across a mall with satellite [pinpoint] accuracy in less than a week. There is only so much a human can do in a lifetime.

A: What advice would you give an aspiring AI artist?

VE: Never stop creating A.I art, we are in the A.I Golden Renaissance Era, none of this will be forgotten. And it will be remembered for a very long time.

A: What artists, if any, influence your artistic process?

“... we are in the **AI Golden Renaissance Era,
, none of this will be forgotten.”**

VE: Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali, and Rembrandt.

A: How do traditional artist respond to your art?

VE: Very negatively, if they know its made by A.I. Most of the time they mistake it for real art lol.



A: You say "they mistake it for real art." Care to elaborate?

VE: Its real art to me, for most when given information about how it was created, dismiss it as a filter. The issue was related to PRISM app being released on the iOS, they immediately followed Instagram and called it a filter because it processed quickly, this resulted in most of the public being misinformed. The reality is that you can't process neural-net artwork that quick, it requires heavy GPU's for that amount of detail. Most still think it can be done with a phone in seconds. As for me, I try to keep the creation details to a minimum, by pointing towards neural-style.

A: I noticed you were banned from r/art, care to tell us why?

VE: I've posted my A.I Art in r/art for a few months, Had trouble putting in a proper title since everybody considered it a different thing due to it being generated by A.I, Eventually one post exploded in upvotes, It got silently removed without reason. So I reuploaded it on r/Pics and started a witchhunt, it gain ground very quickly, but it also got the post removed. After investigating, One of the Mods in r/Art said I broke the rules by posting a link to my website in the comment section. So it was grounds for removal of everything I posted in r/art (alot of hardwork gone in seconds). I was given no warning or multiple strikes. Just a quick corporate silent take down. I got cussed out by a r/Art mod, but he deleted his message afterwards. I concluded that r/art didn't not welcome me at all, and that the decision came from Corporate reddit since it monitors its main subbredits.

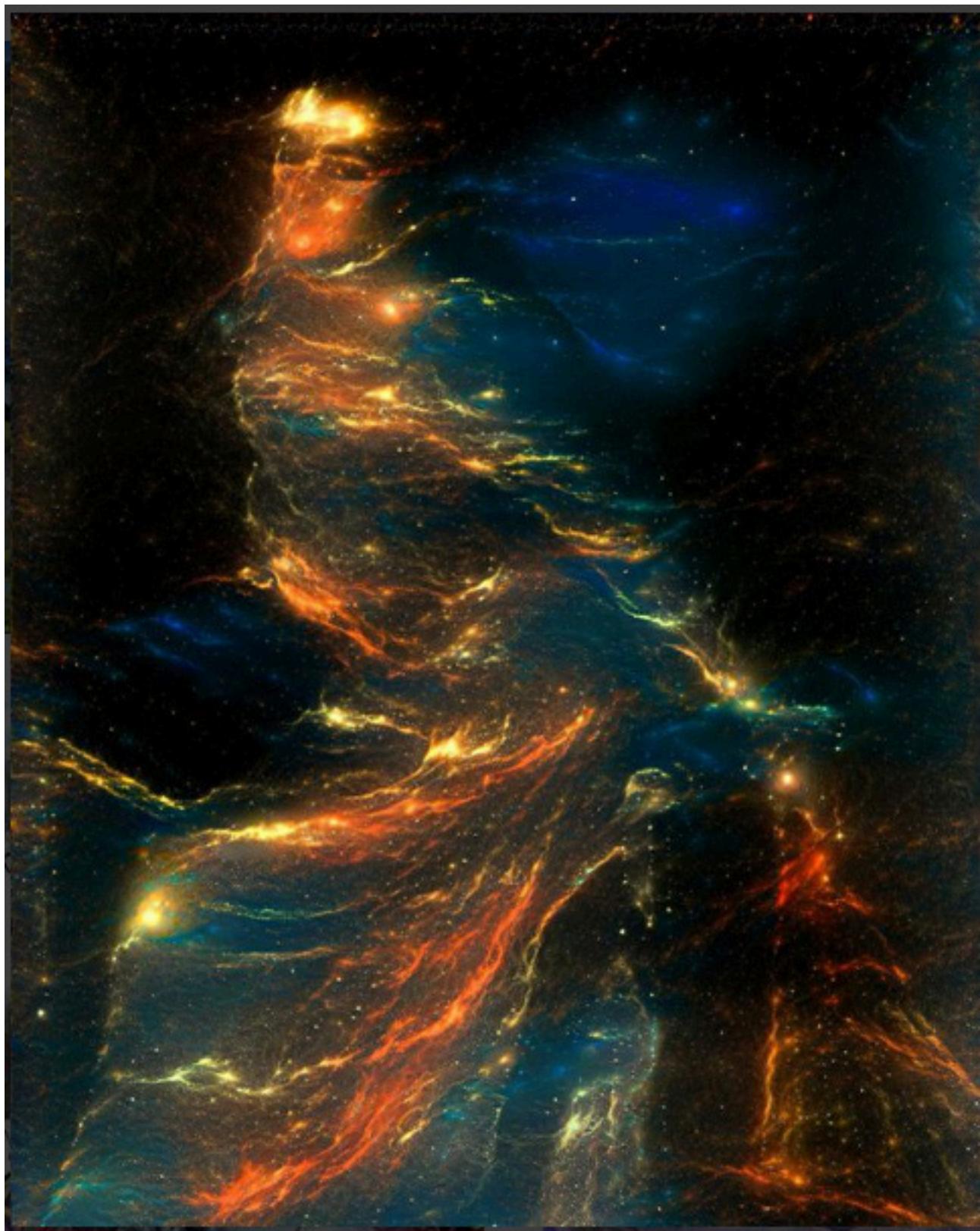


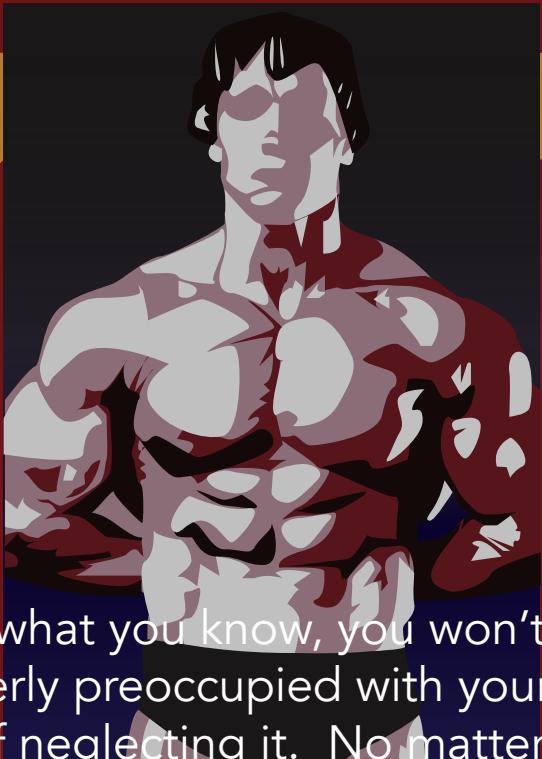
A: What are your future plans concerning your art?

VE: To continue releasing A.I artwork for the public to see online and to obtain a self-learning robotic oil pastel arm, eventually a complete human-droid painter.

A: Where can we see more of your art?

VE: You can follow me on Reddit my username is vic8760, or my website Bengautti.com





Lets face it. No matter what you know, you won't be taken seriously if you don't look the part. Not being overly preoccupied with your physical appearance shouldn't be taken to the extreme of neglecting it. No matter what your style is, proper hygiene and grooming are important. This also goes hand in hand with proper nutrition and exercise. Execellence is a way of life that must be cultivated in everything you do.

Welcome to The Rec Room. Here you can find life tips and guidance from guys who strive for execellence in their daily lives. These men appy the axioms of ARO in their lives and it shows. These men won't just show you what it means to have persistence and dedication; they'll help you achieve it!



THE **REC** ROOM

MANUFACTURING



SUCCESS

1.14 years straight with no sleep. 13.70 months of bone grinding practice of your craft. 416.67 days of blood sweat and tears. The fabled 10000 hours. 600000 minutes of studying, analyzing, and executing your moves so repetitively that you can do them sleeping upside down underwater while reciting the works of Kalil Gibran. 36 million seconds to become a legend.

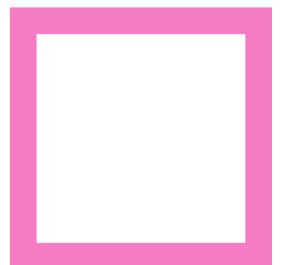
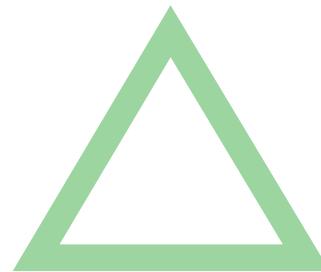
Seizo has put in those 36 million seconds and more clocking hours on games from the time he could hold a controller. He's a gamer's gamer. A cut above the rest and able to pick up any game with ease. He's had the chance to do commentary at E3 and compete in tournaments. We sat down to talk with him about his life, love of gaming, and the culture.

ARO (A): Do you have a favorite genre of video games?

Seizo (S): Umm na each genre has its own appeal so I can't really say I have a favorite.

A: How long would you say you've been a gamer?

How old am I? That's my answer to that.

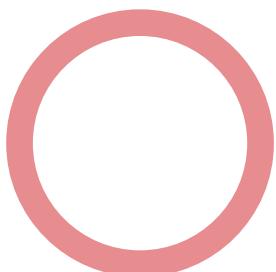
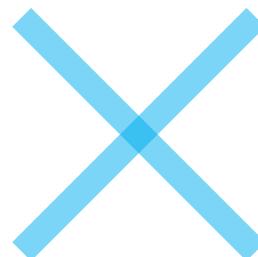
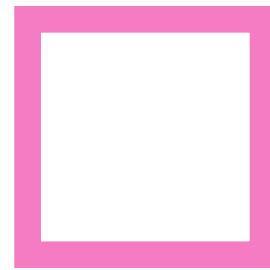


A: Haha I don't know how old are you?

S: Im 23.

A: Ok so you came out the womb with a controller. Sonic or Mario?

S: Sonic



A: Nintendo or Xbox?

S: Nintendo

A: Xbox or Playstation?

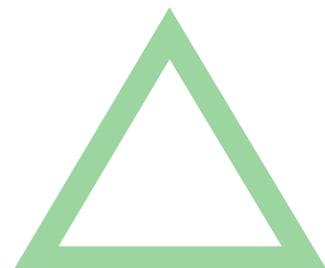
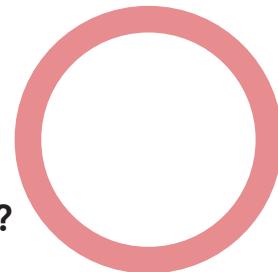
S: Playstation. Sorry Xbox you lost.

A: Nintendo or Playstation?

S: Hmm. That's a hard one.

A: Maybe I should just have had you rank those?

S: Probably.



A: How serious for you is gaming?

S: Ahm, not serious enough for me to get paid, although that would be interesting. But I like to win, a lot. So fairly serious. On a scale of 1-10 probably like an 8.

A: Thats pretty serious. That's almost like atomic blonde bombshell serious.

S: Like Samus?

A: I'd consider her an atomic blonde bombshell so ya, pretty serious. Do you compare yourself to others that game?

S: People I'm playing with or well known people?

A: Both.

S: When I'm playing with people I more pay attention to that. When I'm on my own and learning and developing my craft trying to see how some of the other high levels do things and learn from them and shape it into my own way and do what I have to do with it. I guess you start to think about higher level players as you get higher anyway. Eventually you start thinking about the top because your like right there.

A: So you want to be the best?

S: Doesn't everybody?

A: Well...

S: If your a 90's kid.

A: Fair enough. Do you feel like games have gotten harder or easier?

S: Easier.

A: Do you wish developers would go back to making hard games?

S: Yes. YES.

A: What about Darksouls though? Isn't that a hard game?

S: Ok that's one game out of how many games come out a year. I'm not sure but the point is there are a lot of games that come out and Dark Souls is just one. It's not even just Dark Souls. Some of the savage stuff I do on FF [Final Fantasy for those not in the know] I wouldn't even call hard but some people thinks it's like the

**“you start thinking
about the top
because your like
right there... if your**

a 90’s kid.”

hardest thing ever. It's like people not just in games but in general always want their hand held.

A: Do you feel it's a niche community that wants harder games or overall the gaming community as a whole wants harder games?

S: I guess it's kind of a niche community because some people just want to take it easy and go through the game. But then there is the rest of the people that I hangout with we all think the same. We're over here getting our faces beat in and then beat their faces in and win and feel triumphant.

A: Right What system did you start playing on?

S: I grew up playing on Nintendo 64 and the GameBoy Color. Those two started it. What got me hooked was Smash Bros. obviously. Mario 64, Kirbys tilt and tumble Kirbys dream land and I gues you could also say when the Gameboy advance came out Sonic. I played Sonic Advanced I don't know how many times.

A: Ya Nintendo was the biggest thing back then.

S: You already know.

A: What games that are coming out are you excited about?

S: Dragon ball fighters comes out in like two days. I'm going to be all over that. And then monster hunters also comes out in like 2 days so there's that

A: Are you going to get any sleep?

S: Haha I don't know. And there's also Disidia(sp?) I thnk at the end of this month or a little later. There's also a new patch coming for Final Fantasy coming out which is going to have like a whole new set of raids and everything going so January is pretty nice.

A: What game do you spend a lot of time on now?

S: Final Fantasy XV at the moment.

A: If someone wants to challenge you 1 v 1 how can they find you?

S: Add me on Discord [Seizo#7936] or just get on Final Fantasy and tell people your looking for Issa and you'll find me.

A: Can we expect you at any tournaments this year?

S: Probably not this year honestly. Financial things.

S: I've heard that some people offer gaming lessons and pointer on how to get good. Is this something that you do?

S: Kind of. Not really. There's people that get paid for that I think actually but I teach people when they say they need help. I try to be a jack of all trades at whatever I play or at least in Final Fantasy. I've been teaching a bunch of different people in a bunch of different classes because I can play any of them really. Anybody that reaches out to me I just try to help along.

S: Are your pupils making you proud?

S: Most of them. There's some I need to have a talk with. They have brought shame to my Dojo. They're horrible

S: If you could live in one game universe which would it be?

S: Man that's a rough one. Hmm, I honestly don't know if I have an answer to that one right now. There's too many good ones.

S: You can only pick one.

S: Oh ok I'd live in what's that game called? Any of the Jump games. Jump Superstars, Jump Ultimate Stars Gate Stars, vs, any of those.

S: That's like a nexus point for multiple universes not A universe

S: Exactly it is its own universe and the link between all anime universes. You said I can't live in multiple universes watch me.

S: You'll be the first gamer to bend space and time and transcend humanity?

S: Yep.

S: Well we look forward to watching you succeed and we hope you do.

S: Thank you sir.

CLOSING REMARKS

We've come to the end of our first issue. I hope you found our magazine insightful and entertaining. We will be back this summer taking things in a new direction with a website. This is the first and last issue but our journey is far from over. In the mean time keep striving for your goals. Don't stop trying to grow just because it's winter. Like the great Dom Kennedy says we "grind all winter just to shine all spring." Take the time to build a strong foundation for whatever it is you are trying to achieve so that it remains long into the future. You won't succeed overnight but remain persistent. And always remember: Be Bold. Seek Truth.

Did you enjoy the magazine? Want to complain about something we wrote? Would you like to contribute? Or maybe you just want to tell us about something that's been troubling you. What ever it is I would love to hear from you. Drop me a line at theopanousrex@gmail.com Converting to a website

